

# Alberta history

WINTER 1983



*Mounted Police Festivities, 1874, by Henri Julien*

- Edgar Dewdney Diary, Part I
- Growth Along the C & E
- Coal Mining
- Athabasca Missions & Schools
- William Metzler, NWMP
- Tribute to Red River Cart



# Alberta History

Winter, 1983

Volume 31, Number 1

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**Cover Illustration:** During their march west in 1874, the newly-formed North-West Mounted Police were accompanied by artist Henri Julien. He made this sketch of men entertaining themselves during a rest along the route.

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# The Starvation Year

## *Edgar Dewdney's Diary for 1879*

### Part 1

edited by

HUGH A. DEMPSEY

BY THE SPRING of 1879, the buffalo had virtually vanished from the western Canadian prairies. Only two years earlier, Lieut. Gov. David Laird had told the Indians at the Blackfoot treaty that the herds would last for at least another ten years. Now they were gone. Some Indians had pursued the remnants into the United States while others went to their reserves. There they faced starvation unless the government was willing to feed them.

Into this calamitous situation came Edgar Dewdney, onetime civil engineer in British Columbia and former federal Member of Parliament for Yale-Kootenay. Born in Britain in 1835, he had gone to British Columbia at the age of 24, planning to stay for only a decade before returning to his homeland. Instead, he had become a part of the Canadian political scene.

In 1879, he was a Conservative stalwart and faithful supporter of Sir John A. Macdonald. When the prime minister selected him to become Indian Commissioner of the North-West Territory, he knew he was appointing a man who would be loyal to the party's cause. At the same time, Dewdney was a respected engineer who was widely known in the West.

Before leaving Ottawa, Dewdney was given a set of detailed instructions by his immediate superior, Col. J.S. Dennis, Deputy Minister of the Interior. The instructions noted that "the existing Indian agencies throughout the Territories will be placed under your supervision." Farming and cattle raising were to be encouraged with the establishment of 15 farming agencies. Farming on a large scale was to be carried out at two places — one in the vicinity of Fort Macleod and the other at Fort Calgary.<sup>1</sup>

When he left for the West on May 29th, 1879, Dewdney carried with him a small bound volume in which he kept a daily diary for the next six months. During much of this time he ranged between Fort Macleod, Fort Calgary, Fort Edmon-



The Hon. Edgar Dewdney, in his official dress as Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territory, April 1883.

ton, and Battleford. Much of the information he noted was used later in his annual report<sup>2</sup>, but the diary itself contains many personal comments and observations not included in his official statement.

This diary is in the Dewdney Papers of the Glenbow Archives in Calgary. In preparing it for publication, minor editing was done, particularly in structuring his rambling notes and abbreviated jottings into some form of sentences. In most cases, this has simply meant placing a full stop in place of interminable dashes that he used to separate his phrases. Practically no changes were necessary in the wording and nothing of importance has been omitted. To avoid excessive use of footnotes, people's names, positions, etc., have been placed in square brackets within the body of the text.

Hugh A. Dempsey is Editor of *Alberta History*.



The first part of Dewdney's diary deals with his trip to the West via Fargo, in the Dakotas, and Fort Benton, Montana. Using North-West Mounted Police facilities, he travelled to Fort Walsh where he met his first delegation of Indians. "They are awful beggars," he noted, "but I think they are really hungry."

From there he went to Fort Macleod where he learned that the Indians were starving at Blackfoot Crossing. After locating an Indian Department farm near Pincher Creek and settling business in the area, he went to the Blackfoot Reserve where he discovered that the Indians were eating gophers, mice and badgers. He also was told that a local trader, Lafayette French, was taking advantage of the situation by buying horses from the Indians for practically nothing. However, discord among the white settlers made it impossible for him to determine the truth of the allegations and to take any action.

Returning to Fort Macleod, Dewdney continued to meet with starving Indians, arranged his new employees, and tried to get some semblance of order in the chaotic situation which he had discovered upon his arrival. He also was worried about spending too much money. "The greatest care should be taken," he wrote, "so as not to lead the Indians to believe that there would be regular rations whether they worked or not."

Dewdney later went to Fort Calgary, where he bought John Glen's farm for use by the Indian Department. Then, after a stormy meeting with Sarcee chief Bull Head, he prepared to go to Fort Edmonton to see how matters were in the northern part of the Territory. The second part of the journal will pick up the story from there.

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*May 19th, 1879, Monday.* Left Toronto for the North-West via Collingwood, Duluth, Bismarck and Fort Benton. The Mounted Police left by special train 83 men and about the same number of horses. I remained until the 12:45 train left. Capt. [E.D.] Clark also stopped to finish up matters. At Barrie the train ran down to the town about one mile from the main line. Then I sent my card to Insp. [Hewitt] Bernard & Clark wrote a note. Barrie is situated most prettily on the North or West end of Lake Simcoe. I think I never saw a more picturesque site for a town. The weather was delightful and the Lake as smooth as glass. At 7 p.m. arrived at Collingwood & found the *City of Owen Sound* waiting for us. The horses & freight were all on board by 8 p.m. when we sailed.

The young recruits behaved well and compared favourably with raw recruits in the old country when first leaving their homes. The steamer is a long narrow boat of 1,000 tons burden & crew & in rough weather I fear would make it very uncomfortable for man & beast. The Bishop of Algoma, his wife and niece are on board and probably about 20 to 30 passengers besides the Police. Mrs. Col. [James F.] McLeod, her sister, child & servant are on board bound for Winnipeg. Before leaving, Capt. Robertson, brother of A.P. Robertson, came on board to see me, and expressed his regret that I was not going up with him. He is very like his brother.

*May 20th, Tuesday.* During the night we stopped at Owen Sound, horses very uneasy, made good running I believe. Lake is very calm — rather misty so unable to see the scenery. In the afternoon made the Manitoulin Island. Stopped at Little Current. The Island rough on the side we are but reported well settled & land of good quality on the south west side. Wind blowing fresh at 10 p.m. but moderated during the night.

*May 21st, Wednesday.* All day the scenery very pretty, channel running between a number of Islands. Navigation intricate & steamers obliged to lie over at night. Stopped at Bruce Mine, St. Josephs, where we took on a large supply of wood enough to take us to Duluth. Arrived at the Sault St. Marie at 4 p.m., remained on Canadian side about ½ an hour, landed some freight. The Bishop of Algoma got off, his summer residence is here. The Sault is very pretty situated at the foot of the rapids which are about 1 mile in width. Sailed from Canadian side at 5 p.m. & crossed over to American side, entered the Canal at once, and while passing the Locks inspected the new canal. This will take ships drawing 16 feet of water while the old one only takes 14 ft. draft. The new one is a splendid piece of work, walls of large blocks of sandstone. Got through the Canal in about ½ hour and entered the great Lake Superior. We were greatly surprised to find that there was little wind on the Lake and during the night the Lake became as smooth as glass. Turned in at 11 p.m.

*May 22nd, Thursday.* Lake quite calm. At 12 noon made point on the South shore of Lake, the Capt. having taken the South shore course in order that we might make Duluth as quickly as possible. This is 60 or 70 miles shorter than the North shore. The boat will call at Ft. William on their down trip. Grub on the boat has improved the last day and we are getting some excellent white fish & trout. Staterooms are small but beds most comfortable —





James F. Macleod, commissioner of the NWMP, is seen here, second right, with other members of the Force in the late 1870's. At left is Malcolm Millar, with Insp. E. Dalrymple Clark, centre, and Dr. John Kittson.

spring mattresses. Weather continued good all day. In the evening some of the young Police sang & played the Piano. The engineer sang "Pinifore" very well.

*May 23rd, Friday.* On getting up found Duluth in sight, situated at head of Lake on side of steep side Hill resembling New Westminster but not so extensive. It has a busy appearance about the Railway terminals & Docks. Got everything off in good shape. Stored freight &c. at warehouse at Dock. Found Custom House Authority — very accommodating. Went to the Clark hotel, this is the best hotel and was very comfortable & manager very obliging. Had dinner after which I took Mrs. McLeod & sister for a drive down the Lake to a place called New London, 4 miles from Duluth. It is now almost abandoned but there are some very fine Houses built there. Turned in early & good night's rest. Bought some copper specimens.

*May 24th, Saturday.* In the morning did a little shopping; bought 4 water proof shirts — 3 for the men 1 for myself — 3 \$.50 and 1 \$1.50, also a good blanket for myself made in Indiana very like the best Oregon blanket — \$8.50. In the afternoon moved down to station checked luggage & left at 6 p.m. one hour later, a good sleeper on. Had supper at Lac Du . . . — not much. Turned in at 10 p.m. The scenery after leaving Duluth as far as

the rocky country extends is very pretty, following up a rapid River called the St. Louis, I think, with a succession of Falls.

*May 25th, Sunday.* Awoke to find oneself in the Prairie country. Breakfast at Fargo, took horses out & fed them, remaining about ten horses. The Railway is determined to send us straight on which was just what we wanted. Fargo is a nice thriving town & has made great strides the last 3 years. Every station is covered with all sorts of agricultural implements — saw two kinds of self Binders; this indicated the large agricultural country we are now in. One farm, the Dalrymple, is said to have 11,000 acres in crop this year. The land is mostly a rich black loam although through several of the Railway cuttings I see gravel coming very near the surface. At Jamestown had supper & had to wait for some time for it. No telegraph working Sunday & so they have no knowledge of our coming. Left Jamestown at 6 p.m. & arrived at Bismarck at 12:30. Had to take off horses & stable them; very dark & streets very muddy. Mr. Conrad & his brother met us & did all they could to make it pleasant. After getting through with the horses, ran the car down to the steamer *Red Cloud*. Very glad to get on board; had some supper & turned in at 3 a.m.

*May 26th, Monday.* Remained on board until after dinner, then went up to Bismarck — a small



nice a person in this far West. Their House, a new brick one, is very comfortable and handsomely furnished equal to anything in Ottawa, except Strathcona's & Mrs. Tilley's. A steamer arrived about an hour after us.

*June 10th to the 16th.* Engaged at Benton purchasing horses and getting ready to start for the Interior. McLeod intended at first to go direct to Ft. McLeod but hearing that so large a number of Indians were going to Cypress he thought it better to go there direct on the 17th. I started [Thomas] Wright & [H.J.] Taylor off; they camped at the Teton. McLeod determined to send his men off on the next day.

*June 18th, Wednesday.* I hitched up my horses & took some oats out to the Teton to Wright — horses worked well. Police left in the morning & made the Ferry on the Marias. Made a second trip to Wright & told him to leave on the morning of the 19th. Heavy thunder storm & rain.

*June 19th, Thursday.* Sent my light waggon off in charge of Rogers. Murphy my driver went with him to see him up the hills; all right as far as the Ferry. Set to work to settle all ac/ in town. *Dakota* arrived in — a fine new boat.

*June 20th & 21st.* Could not get through with reports & settling ac/ in time to get off; finished up everything 2 a.m.

*June 22nd, Sunday.* Up at 5 a.m., packed up traps, loaded waggon & left for Fort Walsh. Col. McLeod, Capt. Clark & 7 or 8 men & their waggons crossed Marias' Ferry about 11 a.m. & camped at springs at 4 p.m.

*June 23rd, Monday.* Pouring with rain in the morning so did not get off until later. One of my horses sick — too much new grass. Camped at Bitter Creek, a short day march, pretty soft. Bitter Creek runs into Box Elder ck. near the N.W. corner of Bear Paw Mtn. The wind howled all night & at 3 a.m. it poured with rain. Did not get off until 10 a.m. on the Tuesday.

*June 24th, Tuesday.* Made good day. Crossed Milk River & found it fordable. Some 10 Red River Carts were there crossing, some with one horse, others with two, the front horses fastened by a rope to his tail to the collar or shaft of the Cart & pulled splendidly. Overtook Rogers here with light waggons. Went on to 12 mile Black Coolie, 70 miles from Fort Walsh. Have been sick for some days & getting worse, I fancy from eating mushrooms. Continually meeting hungry Indians. Camped at Black Coolie.

*June 25th, Wednesday.* Made a good day & camped at 1st creek from Milk R., 30 m. from Fort Walsh. The country from Benton to this point similar, not much good except for grazing — a good sheep country. Saw a few antelope but no buffalo. Lots of old dried carcasses all over the prairie. Still sick.

*June 26th, Thursday.* Very sick this morning. Got off in good time. Had dinner at 10 m. Ck. from Walsh, a pretty bottom, good land. Arrived at Walsh at 5. Took a good rest at noon, pitched tent & I laid down but suffered very much all the way to the Ft. At the Ft. met Col. [A.G.] Irvine & the other officers who were very kind, Col. Irvine giving me his room. Dr. [John] Kitson prescribed & I went to bed. Lots of Indians here.

*June 27th, Friday.* In bed all day. Medicine did me good and am much better to-day.

*June 28th, Saturday.* Up for breakfast, much better but weak. A large band of Assiniboinés arrived yesterday and will come to the Ft. to-day; have appointed an interview with Chiefs to-day — Assiniboiné, Crees, Bloods, Blackfoot. At noon the Assiniboinés who are camped four miles or so from here came to the Ft. in procession & looked very pretty, all mounted and carrying their Treaty flag with them. When they came near the Ft. they formed into line & did it very well. The Chief came up & shook hands. After lunch we met the Chiefs in large marquee in Fort & had an interview. Col. McLeod made a speech and introduced the new Chief & then the Chiefs all spoke but, getting late, they wished to adjourn until tomorrow & hold council tonight about the Farming & talk over it tomorrow when I address them.

*June 29th, Sunday.* Attended Church Parade in the morning, men turned out well. In the afternoon had another interview with Crees & Assiniboinés, satisfactory, and I think they are anxious to get to work. Gave them some Beef & flour. They are awful beggars, but I think they are really hungry. Rode to Police farm.

*June 30th, Monday.* Writing almost all day for the Mail. Wrote to Jeanie, Col. [J.S.] Dennis, Larry McD., White & official to Conrad, L. Vankoughnet, Helena Herald, Benton Record, also to Mr. McCall — Winnipeg, Baker & Co. Big Bear came in & proposed to take the Treaty. My horses got away from the Herd.

*July 1st, Tuesday.* Police had sports & they went off well. Found that the Butcher had got my horses from the Hills & has been riding them all day hun-





The first place visited by Dewdney was Fort Walsh, seen here in 1878.

ting for cattle. Had an interview with some non-Treaty Cree Indians. They are said to have cut themselves off from Big Bear although they deny it. They agree to sign the Treaty to-morrow. We shall see.

*July 2nd, Wednesday.* Sent Telg. to Kerlock, wrote Jeanie. Had interview with Big Bear & other Indians that promised to take the Treaty. Little Pine & Lucky Man did so, leaving Big Bear almost alone. Gave some Beef, Tobacco, Tea & Sugar to those who took the Treaty. Big Bear would like to come in but is afraid of being laughed at. In the evening the Assiniboines had a dance again in the Fort, another begging arrangement.

*July 3rd, Thursday.* Little Child brought the Indians he wanted to look after his garden which I promised to feed. I gave Little Pine & Lucky Man copies of the Treaty made with them. The Assiniboines left this morning. The Crees are also gone off & I hope the Fort will have a little rest now.

*July 4th, Friday.* The mail arrived with two letters from Jeanie, No. 6 & 7. News arrived of the death of Prince Imperial & that Hanlan won the Boat Race. Had long interview with Big Bear but no results. The same — talk but would not take the Treaty. Parted good friends. Wrote O'Rielly & Jeanie.

*July 5th, Saturday.* Col. Macleod unable to get off. Very tiresome here. Played with Recruits,

cricket, ground very bad & dangerous. Buffalo coming near. Express arrived from Wood Mt., no news. Sitting B. at same place near the line.

*July 6th, Sunday.* Left for Ft. Macleod at 2 p.m. and camped at head of Mt. at Springs, plenty of wood, good camp. Wagon broke down & had a runaway, King Bolt broken. Norrish went back to Ft. Walsh & got new one, returned to camp at 8 p.m. Top of Mt. table land, good feed.

*July 7th, Monday.* Left camp at ½ after 5. Some hard ground going down the hill from Mt. Broke a spring in my wagon but fixed it up all right. Crossed two Creeks, not very good bottom. Camped at nice stream for noon. In the afternoon met Mail from Ft. Macleod, letter from Unwin to Col. stating that Blackfoot were starving. In the afternoon passed spring at Coal Seam; camped at Cooley with Lake in it. Mosquitoes very bad in the evening but not bad at night. Rolling Prairie, must be very dry in Fall. Some small lakes but few good anywhere. Made 53 miles to-day.

*July 8th, Tuesday.* Left at 6 p.m. Very rough Prairie ground. Jerry saw two lots of Buffalo & ran one but killed none. Saw Antelope in the morning. Noon at small swamp. Met two men, 1 cart & loose horse on their way to Ft. Walsh. Had lunch at small swamp in the afternoon, went on 17 miles to large Coolie, camped by the side of Lake. Jerry rode over to the far side & killed an Antelope but



found it sick. Mosquitoes not bad. Country all prairie & feed good but fit for nothing but Pasture. In the Fall water scarcer, but up to now plenty of small swamps. The road a little better to-day.

*July 9th, Wednesday.* Got off early and made the St. Mary's River about 11 a.m. On the top of Hill found a lot of Baker's Team waiting for the water to fall in the bottom and Jerry found Wright & Taylor who had been there 3 days & unable to cross. The rope was broke & boat gone. Jerry tried the crossing & the Col. determined it was all right so we got dinner & prepared to cross; after dinner got over all right. Wright's team got into trouble in some quicksand but got out with help. The heavy team camped; the Col. & I went on to Ft. Macleod, also [Insp. P.R.] Neale crossed our stuff & swam horses. Mr. [Edmond] Frechette gave me up his room & so I was made very comfortable. Fort Macleod is built on an Island & the main river having broken through the slough on the south side makes it very inconvenient. A few more freshets will carry away the Fort. Read letters from Col. Dennis about the Farms, Mr. Wright to have his choice.

*July 10th, Thursday.* Felt quite refreshed after a good night's rest; inspected Fort & Town. Wright, Taylor, [T.] Rogers, & the Col's waggons arrived. The two first camped on the south side until I determine which Farmer will take charge here. L'Hereux from Blackfoot Crossing is here with gloomy account of Indians. Indian Cattle that had strayed found & brought back. Sat with Capt. [William] Winder for an hour or so in the evening.

*July 11th, Friday.* Wrote letter to Wright asking him to take his choice of Farms — he took Calgary — so I instructed him to cross as soon as Ferry was all right. I told Taylor to be ready to start for Police Farm in the afternoon. Got Half Breed to travel with Wright to Calgary & gave him about 800 lb. of Freight & promised him \$10.00 for acting as Interpreter & guide. Sorted out what stuff Rogers could dispense with to give to Half Breed. Went down town & priced flour at Power's & Baker's found neither willing to sell except at large rates. Left for Farm at 4 p.m. after sending Taylor to camp at 15m. Creek so that he could meet me tomorrow. Arrived at Farm at 9 p.m., had good supper & turned in. The houses are very comfortable & well built. The country between here & Fort is good rolling prairie with thousands of acres of good wheat land & pasture untouched. Ed Murphy joined Mr. Wright.

*July 12th, Saturday.* Break-fasted early. All night the wind howled and was very cold. After breakfast Col. Macleod, [Insp. Albert] Shurtliff, D. Kennedy & [A.P.] Patrick started for a ride to inspect for locality of Farm. After riding all day came to the conclusion that adjoining the Police Farm was the best, taking everything into consideration. Timber 7 miles off, Mails 5, no fire wood, but the *land excellent*. Hay ground close by. Taylor arrived with his waggon all right. Kraus from Kootenas stopped here & I wrote letter to Irvine about Mrs. Milby's cattle & the Pass.

*July 13th, Sunday.* Got up at ½ after 5 a.m. & left after 6 a.m. for New Farm to show Taylor where we will build the house. Located site & returned to breakfast. [Jim] Scott, the man in charge of cattle, was sent for & I explained to him that I could not pay so much for the taking care of the cattle & advised him to get Indians to help herd. He has promised to do so & have ready for me when I return. Left after seeing Taylor & giving him instructions. Went to Crow's Creek where I promised to meet a Pagan [Peigan] Chief & Jerry Potts to settle about the Reserve. Patrick, the Surveyors Party, also came to this point. Arranged that the reserve should commence at the head about 4 miles below the Crow's Creek & run up stream 10 miles; instructed Patrick to survey this running back 4 miles on each side of the Creek, then returned to Ft. Macleod arriving just in time to miss our dinner. The Cook, however, got us a good Beefsteak. Found that Capt. Irvine was at Belly River & he sent on the Mail by Macdonald who had gone down to arrest an Indian for killing cattle. Rec'd letter from Sir John stating that Mr. Elliott Galt was leaving to act as my Secretary, also letter from Jeanie & Conrad.

*July 14th, Monday.* Col. Irvine arrived in time for breakfast; left very few Indians at Cypress. Had shoes taken off my horses, having shod at Walsh. Wrote letter to Col. Dennis, Jeanie, Clark & Conrad. In the afternoon saw some Indians, & gave them some food, numbers here very hungry. They told me they had sold their horses & pawned their guns to get food & now had nothing. There is no doubt great hardship among them. Dined with Capt. Winder in the evening. A letter came in from Father [Constantine] Scollen, very impertinent I think, about the Indians. L'Hereux left to-day for the Crossing with some supplies for Crow Foot. Attended trial of Indians [Two Medicine Pipe and Swan Leggings] for killing cows, no evidence, dismissed.



*July 15th, Tuesday.* Finishing letters, &c., had waggon fixed. Held long interview with Pegans & Bloods — appeared satisfactory. They say they will go to work so I intend to try them & will put a white man on the Pegan Reserve at once. Gave them some flour & tea & tobacco. The Cree interpreter arrived with Express from Ft. Walsh. An officer had arrived there from Gen'l. Miles who wanted some Indians & a deserter. Made contract with [W.S.] Gladstone to build house for Taylor — \$800. I found windows, doors, nails, hinges, locks. Engaged [Percy] Robinson for the trip & will put [John] Norrish on one of the Reserves.

*July 16th, Wednesday.* Gave some Crees flour & tea to take them to Cypress. Gladstone signed contract for house, Shurtliff to inspect same. Engaged Paquit. Robinson started for Calgary. Sent letter to [Charles] Kettles to come in to talk about taking charge of Pegan Farm. Wrote to Wright; Robinson to look out site for Farm so as to delay me as little as possible at Morleyville. Left with Col. Macleod for Blackfoot Crossing, camped at Little Bow.

*July 17th, Thursday.* Left camp early. Had dinner by swamp about 20 miles from camp. Arrived at Crossing at 3 p.m., drove to [Lafayette] French's House where we met French, Father Scollen and a lot of Indians. From French & Father Scollen heard awful tales of the state of Indians. They have been selling their horses for a mere song, eating gophers, mice, Badgers & for the first time have hunted the Antelope & nearly killed them all off. One woman came to French and said she must have food for her children . . . if not she would go off and hang herself. Strong young men were now so weak that some of them could hardly walk — often who last winter were fat & healthy are now skin & bone. Read a note while at French's Ho. from L'Heureux inviting the Co. & myself to lunch with him. There appears to be no love lost between him & Father Scollen. We went to his tent but had had lunch. He gave us the news of the Camp & said that Crow Foot had made a good speech to the Indians that morning & told them that some of them had found fault with his taking the Treaty, but that now they saw that he was right, that things had changed with them & that now they were begging for food from the fort while if they had broken the laws, &c. & they would be now starving. Father Scollen dined with us & felt in much better humor than he did before dinner. He asked to give him some beef, &c. as he had given all his grub to the Indians. Killed 3 Beef & distributed it & thus made 12 to 1400 human beings happy for a time.

*July 18th, Friday.* The Indians did not come at 10 a.m. — some difficulty in crossing. A small boat is all the means they have a crossing, except by swimming with their horses which they do with great dexterity. A little after 11 Crow Foot & Eagle Tail, chief of the Pegans, with all their Minor Chiefs assembled at a room in French's. Crow Foot promised to go to Farming and assist all he could to carry out the govt's wishes. He said he had kept his young men from going over the line for fear of their getting into trouble with the Americans & had also kept them from going to Ft. Macleod for fear of their killing the settler's cattle. At one time his young men were on the point of rebellion & taunted him with taking the Treaty, but as soon as he had heard that the fort was serving up supplies & that they were obliged to beg for food he said, "Suppose you had not taken the Treaty & were in this poor condition? How could you go & ask the fort to feed you? I told you I was right & now you see it." He said to me, "If you will drive away the Sioux & make a hole for the Buffalo to come in, we won't bother you about grub, but if you don't you must feed us for we are starving." He spoke very sensibly & I believe will do good work in his Reserve. I let a contract to Mr. French to break up 50 ac at \$4.00 per acre; this will do away with the necessity of buying teams & next year the Indians will be able to help put in the crops & plough. It is useless to think of getting them to break ground. Killed three more cattle & gave them 15 sacks of flour between the whole camp, also some tobacco, tea & sugar & they were delighted.

*July 19th, Saturday.* Left the Crossing at 11 a.m. after having inspected Crow Foot's camp & shaken hands with all the old men women & children. There are a great number of old people & children & numbers of them are very weak. One woman told French yesterday, "If I can't get any food for my two children I must kill myself. I live only for them & I can't bear to see them starve." They are eating gophers & mice. Returned to French's where our waggon was waiting for us & there found Crow Foot who beckoned to me to come into the room. He then closed the door & told me not to believe what L'Hereux said that he had found out what he was the last two years & not believe what he wrote. I think Father Scollen & French, who appear to be pulling together, are working against L'Hereux — all a pretty set of scoundrels, I think. Made a contract with French to break up 50 ac. on Reservation Left Crossing at 11 a.m., had lunch at a small Coulee & camped at Little Bow at 7 p.m. A heavy thunder storm & rain almost all night.





Jerry Potts, centre, was a scout for the NWMP and served Dewdney during his visit. At right are Supt. John Cotton and Insp. A. Bowen Perry.

*July 20th, Sunday.* Left Camp at 6 a.m. & reached Fort ¼ after 10 a.m. No news. Implements & Farming tools arrived. Robinson got back from Calgary; Wright had gone on to Morleyville. Dined with Capt. Winder. Told [David] McDougal to come to see me tomorrow; he had just arrived from Benton.

*July 21st, Monday.* Busy all day trying to get off by the time the Mail gets up from Calgary. Gave Norrish instructions about Blackfoot Crossing. Saw Kettles about going on to Pegan Reservation; arranged with him at \$50.00 pr. month & rations. Agreed to take MacDougall to Calgary & give him a job. Sent R. Higgs to Taylor's farm to work at \$35.00 pr. month, also the two Paquets who had come in for some checks, &c. Wrote letter to French, Father Scollen, Galt, Jeanie. In the evening rode with Col. Macleod & Major Irvine to [Joseph] MacFarlane's Farm and looked at the grain, &c.; it is a nice Farm & well looked after. I secured \$15,000 of wheat & all the peas he had to spare.

*July 22nd, Tuesday.* No Mail arrived. Wrote letter to Col. Dennis & fixed up generally. Settled with T.C. Powers & David certified to Farm ac/. Sent waggon to Blackfoot Crossing with supplies for Indians; Norrish went out in charge. Arranged for cat-

tle to go as well with waggon. In the afternoon met the Blood's "Blackfoot Young Woman", Chief, & divided 2 steers & gave some tobacco; they all appeared satisfied. Had chat with Winder re Indians during my absence. Arranged for Kettles to go to Pegan Reserve. [J.] Dunbar came to see me about Indians breaking into their fields & hurting crops.

*July 23rd, Wednesday.* Waiting for Mail. Yesterday's Diary should have been for to-day. One day out.

*July 24th, Thursday.* Left for Calgary. Wrote to Conrad sent him an order for Power's ac/; got \$100.00 from David. Wrote Mr. Van [Koughnet]. Gave Robertson \$10.00, Rogers \$1.00 before leaving. Saw the Col. & wished him good-bye. Started at ¼ to 9 a.m.; at 11 ½ hr. we had lunch at the leavings. When we were just ready to leave Kettles arrived to get further instructions about his duty at the Pegan Reservation. Gave him a written memo. Just as we were going to hitch up [Billy] Gladstone the interpreter arrived also to see me about the Pegans & stated that Col. Macleod & Capt. Winder were coming out in a waggon to see me. Shortly after they arrived bringing the Mail & in it a budget for me from Ottawa & B.C. & lots of letters for I.D. which must have been sent by mistake. After the Col. had lunch we had a talk



on Indian matters, he wanting to know what he should do at the several Posts in the way of issuing supplies. We had a long & rather warm discussion & I refused to take the responsibility of giving *Carte Blanche* to all the posts to ration all the Indians. We agreed that the greatest care should be taken so as not to lead the Indians to believe that they would be fed regular rations whether they worked or not. I arranged with the Col. that he should do as had been done heretofore — food to be issued when it was found that Indians were really starving, to those who would work & to the sick & infirm who had no friends & who could not work. We parted the best of friends after my having spoken my mind pretty freely. At 5 p.m. we started on our journey, the Col. returning to Ft. Macleod. We were unable to make Mosquitoe ck. so camped 8 miles south of it on high ground at 8 p.m. Mosquitoes bad & horses restless. Good grazing land, some good agriculture.

July 25th, Friday. Up at 4 a.m., left at 5, crossed Mosquitoe ck. then High River where we dined. The country improves from here; vegetation never rank & soil much better. At Sheep Ck. some 11 [miles] further on better still. Some half breeds have food crops at Pine River and [John] Glen — the man who crossed the Rocky Mt. the same time that I was in charge of Div. of C.P.R. & who took letter Mr. Flurry for me — is settled 7 miles from Calgary on very nice ck & his crops are excellent. He says the two best places for farming are at the mouth of his ck & at Calgary. Arrived at Ft. Calgary at 7 p.m., pretty tired & back troubling me. Found Capt. [Cecil] Dennie [Denny] very kind. MacDougal arrived. Read letter from Wright; he states that he had found no land good of sufficient size for a large farm at or near Morleyville. One of his men are here sent down for flour & oats. Had chat with Denny & found that he had been feeding large quantities of beef to the Sarcees & Blackfoot & paying 7¢ pr. lb. I asked him for a report & he will hand it me tomorrow.

July 26th, Saturday. Found my back worse this morning & put on a Parson plaster. Had interviews with Stoney Chief, Blackfoot & Sarcees. The former appears good Indian & more sensible than any of the others I have met yet & speaks well for Mr. McDougall. They complain of their plows spades & axes. Old Sun [Blackfoot chief] from the Crossing was here begging for a present for his Ceremony to be held in a day or two. I sent an order to Norrish by L'Hereux that an ox be given him on that day & ordered all the Blackfoot to go to

the Crossing. With the Sarcee Chief [Bull's Head] I had some difficulty in convincing him to go to the Crossing. He says there is not a good feeling between his Indians & the Blackfoot & fears trouble if he goes down. I then offered to give him supplies at Ft. Macleod & write below to see whether his Indians could not get a Reserve of their own. He did not like to go to either & ultimately said he would sell all his horses for grub then go to the Prairie & starve. I told him to sleep over what I had said & see me again. He afterwards went to Munro's House the interpreter & said he would go to the Crossing. I sent Wright's man up with letter to Wright to come down at once. Thunderstorm & rain.

July 27th, Sunday. Worse to-day but able to get about a little. In the afternoon took a drive as far as [Sam] Livingstone's Farm; the country is very pretty about here & lots of choice for Farming. Don't like Livingstone's place & think I will either build on the flat below the Elbow River or buy Glen's place. Thunderstorm & rain.

July 28th, Monday. After breakfast saw the Sarcee Chief Bull Head. He promised to go to the Crossing but wanted a letter to Norrish to be fed alone. Had long interview with the Stoneys Chiefs; settled about their Reserves & instructed Patrick. The Stoneys appear the most contented of any of the Indians & I hear have plenty of meat put away. They came down to see me & I gave them two sacks of flour some beef & a little tea. They go back to Morleyville at once. In the evening took a drive down Bow River to look at flat; I did not like it & abandoned the idea of it. Wrote letter to Dennis.

July 29th, Tuesday. Up early. My back better. After breakfast took a drive to flat above Calgary but did not like it. Returned & wrote letters. Sarcees not moving but they are getting no grub. Some Blackfoot are also here; they have had their grub to leave with & will get no more. Mr. Wright arrived in the afternoon on horseback. He had lunch & then we drove to Glen's, taking Macdougall with us. Looked over his house & garden & then went on to mouth of Fish Creek where a man called Taylor had a small patch of barley & oats. The country is very fine, land excellent, plenty of it, lots of poplar. Taylor had two cabins, one with root house attached. This would do for a store, the other would make a stable. The barley is a finer field than I have ever seen; it stands 3 feet high & its level as a billiard table. The oats also look well. He wants \$350 for the improvements & crops & I think I shall



make a bargain with him. He comes up tomorrow morning. In the flat above the mouth of Fish Creek on Bow River there must be 1500 ac of splendid land. Sent boy to tell Gouin to bring down team at once.

*July 30th, Wednesday.* Finished letter to Depart. (Col. Dennis). Glen arrived and I closed with him, purchasing his crop & improvements at \$360.00 for which he put in a cow & calf. In the afternoon drove with the Col. to Wright's Farm. Found Indians camped there & on returning met all the Sarcees & some Blackfoot on their way down to camp there, so I hastened to the Fort & sent an Indian to look after the grain all night. Wright's team arrived in the evening. Macdougall returned from Glen's where he had been to meet a team with the farming implements to stop so that he could take them straight to the Farm.

*July 31st, Thursday.* Rogers will join Wright. Wright found his horse. Arranged with McDougall at \$3.00 for Gouin to superintend building. Got Tilley Bros. to work whip sawing. Bought shingles and instructed Wright to purchase yoke of cattle. Some Indians arrived from the Crossing with a cock & bull story about the white man buying horses with the Gov. cattle. Gave Mr. Gordon some of my grub, which is to be deducted from his wages, also the sack of flour from Police store. Finished letters & ready to start tomorrow.

## NOTES

1. Sue Baptie, "Edgar Dewdney," in *Alberta Historical Review* 16:4;2, Autumn 1968.
2. Report of Edgar Dewdney, Indian Commissioner, in *Sessional Papers of Canada*, 3-4, 13:3, 1880, pp. 79-103.

## ABOUT CALGARY, 1885

Calgary, situated as it is in the beautiful and spacious valley where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet, with the snow-capped Rockies forming a background to the west, affords one of the most beautiful town sites in the North-West. Nature seems to have thrown out an invitation to rich and poor alike to come and enjoy this beautiful situation and most desirable climate.

You frozen people of Ontario, picture to yourselves on this, the 19th day of December, carpenters working on buildings with bare hands and without coats; the writer sitting without fire and with open door; the ground void of snow, and people walking about in summer apparel. Hundreds of cattle roam the prairie, fed only by the hand of nature, that if dressed and hung on the Christmas market with the stall-fed animals of Eastern Canada, would at once attract the eye of the expert. True, we do not enjoy all the advantages and luxuries of our Eastern friends, but we live well enough. The rich coal mines which are being developed give employment to some hundreds of men, and supply us with good fuel at a moderate rate. The rivers supply us with beautiful trout, some weighing as much as ten and eleven pounds. The average weight would probably be a pound. Two saw mills are in operation in the immediate vicinity of Calgary, each with a capacity of about 25,000 in ten hours, and there is a likelihood of the Eau Claire Company erecting a mill here next season. Taking into consideration the quality of wool grown in the district, and the possibility and probability of a much larger quantity being grown each year, we look forward to yet seeing a woollen mill erected and doing a large business. An hospital *pro bono publico* is shortly to be erected on the Government town site. The Bishop of Saskatchewan proposes establishing a college here, and altogether Calgary is destined to become an important point.

We live in a thriving town, where nightly may be heard the hum of the roller rink; where a bell, half-ton in weight, swings majestically from the tower of Pere Lacombe's Catholic Mission house, and on the Sabbath another of almost equal dimensions may be heard pealing forth from the Church of the Redeemer, calling Protestant sinners to repentance.

— "Inhabitant" in The Toronto Mail, December 26, 1885



# Growth Along the C & E

*Early in 1893, a reporter from the Edmonton Bulletin travelled along the Calgary and Edmonton Railway to determine how settlement was progressing along the line. The railway was completed in the summer of 1891, so the year just ended has been the first full one for immigration and settlement. His findings appeared in the Jan. 16th and 19th issues of the Edmonton Journal.*

SINCE THE EARLY 1870s, the country between Calgary and Edmonton has been traversed by a frequently travelled trail. Especially since the completion of the CPR to Calgary, in 1883, the amount of travel has been very great, so that every foot of the ground now being so rapidly covered by settlement is known like an open book to all old residents of the section of the country, and so the change now taking place is more noticed by them than by strangers. While Edmonton town and settlement has been in existence almost from time immemorial, until 1883 the stretch of country between Edmonton and Calgary was as vacant of settlement as the sea. In 1883 settlement at Red Deer was begun and like that at Edmonton grew slowly from that time until 1891. But even in 1891 it amounted to very little, and the traveller between Calgary and Edmonton saw only the stage stations and stopping places for freighters in all that 200 miles of fertile and beautiful country.

In July of 1890 the Calgary & Edmonton railway was commenced at Calgary and completed to Red Deer the same fall. In August of 1891 it was completed to Edmonton and at once the effect an immigration began to be strongly felt. But as may be very readily understood the wave of settlement did not at once rush in. People heard of a new railroad being built, of a new country, and a new kind of country being opened up, and they came to see it before making up their minds to go in and possess it. It was not until the spring of 1892 that the rash of people actually began so that what is now seen is practically the growth of one season.

The 50 miles of plain lying immediately north of Calgary is still just as it was before the railway was built, showing that it is not the railroad but the kind of country that is the attraction. On nearing Olds, the third station north of Calgary at the point where the park country joins the plain, the first signs of new settlement are seen. Little log and frame

houses dot the prairie in all directions on the slopes of smooth grassy knolls, and in the shelter of cozy looking clumps of poplar and willow. This is the youngest of the settlements along the line and consequently the town is as yet chiefly in imagination. However there is the station, an immigrant shed, a store and a hotel, and the enterprising settlers are already erecting a good schoolhouse for the benefit of the children who are to be there next summer.

A colony from Nebraska, of which Messrs. J. Gadsden and W. Mitchell-Innis, both old countrymen, are the leading spirits, have chosen Olds as the scene of their future tussles with fate, and there is every assurance that a large contingent of the future population of the surrounding country will be drawn from Nebraska. Besides the Nebraska men a number of leading Germans, of Waterloo, Ont., headed by J. Y. Shantz, who was chiefly instrumental in locating the Mennonites in Manitoba 16 years ago, have pitched upon Olds as their choice. If they are only a tenth part as successful as Mr. Shantz' exertions in Manitoba have been, the future progress and prosperity of Olds is assured. By the way, the point on the old trail, which corresponds with Olds on the railway line, was known by the much more appropriate and pleasing name of Lone Pine.

Twenty miles north of Olds is Innisfail station and town, claimed by its residents to be the brightest, smartest and most growing town along the whole line. At this point the railway crosses the old trail just north of Contant's stopping place. The first settlers in this vicinity named the locality Poplar Grove, from the beautiful groves of poplar which crown the low hills all around, leaving wide stretches of smooth, sloping, grassy prairie between. Wood and water are more abundant than at Olds, while there is still plenty of open land for grazing or farming, and the Rocky Mountains, one of the grandest sights in the world, still in full view form the back ground of a most lovely picture.

The first houses in the town of Innisfail were erected in the spring of 1891, and at the close of 1892 the place had a population of between three and five hundred. It has five or six excellent stores, two hotels, a good public school, two churches, Presbyterian and Episcopal, and indeed everything that goes to make up a thriving town the centre of a prosperous settlement. Of course, but a small part





A few weeks before the author travelled the C & E line, photographer W.H. Boorne photographed the new community of Innisfail. The railway depot, at right, was the focal point of the district.

of the land is yet brought under cultivation, but all the settlers keep cattle and make butter, and during the past summer a large quantity of butter was shipped from Innisfail to Calgary.

Twenty miles north of Innisfail is Red Deer, in the valley of the Red Deer river, a beautiful stream in a beautiful wide valley of clear prairie surrounded by the high land covered with clumps of spruce and poplar alternating. The Red Deer at this point is about 500 feet wide, with swift current, stony bottom and perfectly clear mountain water. The flat upon which the station and town are situated is perfectly level and clear of everything but the very smallest brush. The soil is slightly sandy so that the discomfort of heavy mud in wet weather is avoided.

The town of Red Deer, like that of Innisfail, was only begun in the spring of 1892, the railroad having arrived late in the previous fall. The original town, if it could be so called, was about three miles further up the river, where the old trail crossed. There the stores of Messrs. Gaetz — the real pioneer of the place — and Burch were situated, also the Mounted Police station and three or four other houses, but the establishment of the railway crossing and station on the next flat below, entirely killed the town at the old crossing and caused the removal of whatever business had been established there to the new town. This has been added to very greatly in the past year, and the Red Deer town

has now a number of business establishments that in the matter of stock carried and buildings occupied would be a credit to a place three times the size.

There is nothing of the tar paper variety of architecture so frequently seen in the new west, about Red Deer. Every building is put up with the evident intention of its helping to make a neat and substantial looking town. The dining station for the railway run between Calgary and Edmonton is at Red Deer. There is a small saw mill, owned by Leo Gaetz, which has converted a great deal of the surrounding spruce bluffs into lumber. Red Deer is an important distributing point, and having the abundant water supply of the river, has advantages for the establishment of manufacturing industries which none of the towns present or prospective between that place and Calgary can possibly have. There is an immense coal deposit 14 miles down the river, which will, no doubt be utilized shortly and will add to the importance of the place.

Nine miles north of Red Deer the railway crosses the Blind Man's river, a fine stream coming from the wet timbered country to the west and flowing into the Red Deer only two or three miles further east. Blackfalds siding is just north of the Blind Man's river valley, on the upland, the grade out of the valley to the north being too heavy to permit of the siding being placed actually on the river. Although there is no station at this siding the train stops to deliver mail, and generally has some



passenger or freight business to do at the same point, owing to the number of settlers who have gone into that neighborhood. But owing to the rolling nature of the country very few houses can be seen.

Off to the east six or eight miles can be seen a range of wooded hills lying north and south, through which the Red Deer river breaks in its course eastward, causing an immense canyon, or very deep narrow valley with precipitous banks. In this canyon is found one of the most remarkable seams of coal known to exist in the Northwest. There is a face of over 40 feet of clear coal exposed for a distance of three or four miles along the side of the valley above the water edge and no one yet knows how far the face extends below the surface of the water.

The first station north of Red Deer, is Lacombe, about a mile east of Barnett's stopping place on the old Calgary trail. The country there is somewhat more broken than at any other point on the line, and while it offers some farming locations that for situation and quality of soil cannot be surpassed, this section of country is best suited for stock raising. There is abundance of hay, plenty of water and plenty of rolling land with the very best of pasture on it. To the east lies the same range of timbered hills mentioned as lying east of Blind Man, and to the west is the almost solid forest of poplar and spruce which extends to the base of the Rocky Mountains. There is a post office at this station and a small store. But there seems to be no reason why a good town should not spring up here, as no doubt it will next summer.

Twenty miles north of Lacombe through the same kind of country suitable chiefly for stock raising is Ponoka station on the Battle river. This river, unlike the streams further south, has a scarcely perceptible valley. The stream rises in Pigeon and Battle lakes, about 50 miles to the north-west in the timbered regions, and takes a northerly bend a couple of miles south-west of the station. It is between one and two hundred feet wide at low water, and becomes very large in high water. This river falls into the Saskatchewan at Battleford, over 200 miles east of the railway crossing, and the country

through which it flows for that whole distance is probably the finest area of agricultural land that the Northwest contains.

The station is on gently rising ground on the west bank of the river, and could not be improved upon as a town site, but unfortunately for its prospects it is cut off to the south-west, west and north by a large block of Indian reserves, which occupy the best agricultural land in the vicinity.

From the station the river runs northerly for seven or eight miles, the railway following its west bank, and about three miles north of the point at which the river bends off to the north-east is a siding at the Indian settlement of Bear's Hill, where there is a Roman Catholic mission. Four or five miles south-east of this siding is the Battle river agency, and a Methodist mission.

At this point a beautiful plain begins which extends from Bear's Hill to the Big Stone creek, about 14 miles from south to north by about the same distance from east to west, beginning at the Battle river on the east, which still flows northerly to a point about ten miles due east of Wetaskiwin station and running westward to the solid timber on the west.

This section of country is very slightly undulating prairie of rich soil and rank growth of grass. There are streams and lakes all around but none of any account on it. However, well water can be had in abundance all over the plain at from ten to 25 feet. There is very little willow or scrub and the land is easily broken for crop. It is no wonder that this choice section of country has attracted a very large number of settlers during the season, probably more than any other point south of Edmonton.

The town of Wetaskiwin, now containing three or four fine general stores, a larger hotel than any other place between Calgary and Edmonton with a population nearly as large as Innisfail, had no existence in the beginning of August last. This place has made a most rapid growth and there is every indication that it will show still more rapid growth next season. The country around Wetaskiwin seems to be most favored by people from the States of Idaho and Washington who have gone and are going there in large numbers.

#### **ELECTRICITY FOR EDMONTON**

A meeting to organize an electric light company was held in Fielders' hall on Wednesday evening, at which there was a large attendance, the 800 shares of subscribed stock being well represented. It was decided to organize the company and a committee was appointed to secure incorporation by letters patent.

— Edmonton Bulletin, September 26, 1891



# Coal Mining

## *A Pictorial Feature*

Coal was first discovered in Alberta in the late 1700's when it was used by fur traders, but not until the arrival of the CPR in 1883 did it become a viable resource. Mines at Canmore served the railway while those near Lethbridge became important to the steamboats along the river. As settlement increased, so did the demand for coal. Small family-owned mines were opened near Edmonton and in other regions of the province, while major mining centres were developed near Drumheller, the Coal Branch, Crowsnest Pass, and Nordegg.

The mine companies ranged from large cor-

porations, which carried shafts deep into the earth, to the tiny wintertime operations that burrowed into hillsides and served local farmers. After the province of Alberta was formed in 1905, regulations were introduced to ensure mine safety, but tragic accidents still are a part of coal mining heritage.

In spite of its vast reserves of coal, Alberta had difficulty in breaking into eastern markets and then suffered further setbacks when trains changed to diesel and homes began using natural gas. In recent years, however, coal is being revived as an important energy resource.



A group of miners, with their lunch buckets in hand, prepare to start work.





Conditions were primitive in Noah Booner's coal mine in the Clover Bar district east of Edmonton.



The handmade coal cars, wooden track, and informal dress of the men all indicate that S.H. Smith's coal mine was a small operation.





This interior view shows men working at the coal face at Battle River Collieries in 1915.



Charlie Farrell's Reid Hill mine was located south-west of Vulcan. Among the group photographed in 1921-22 are the owner, the mine horse *Midget*, and workers Leonard and Harold Crimp.





The Red Deer Valley Coal Company's tipple is seen here near the end of World War Two.

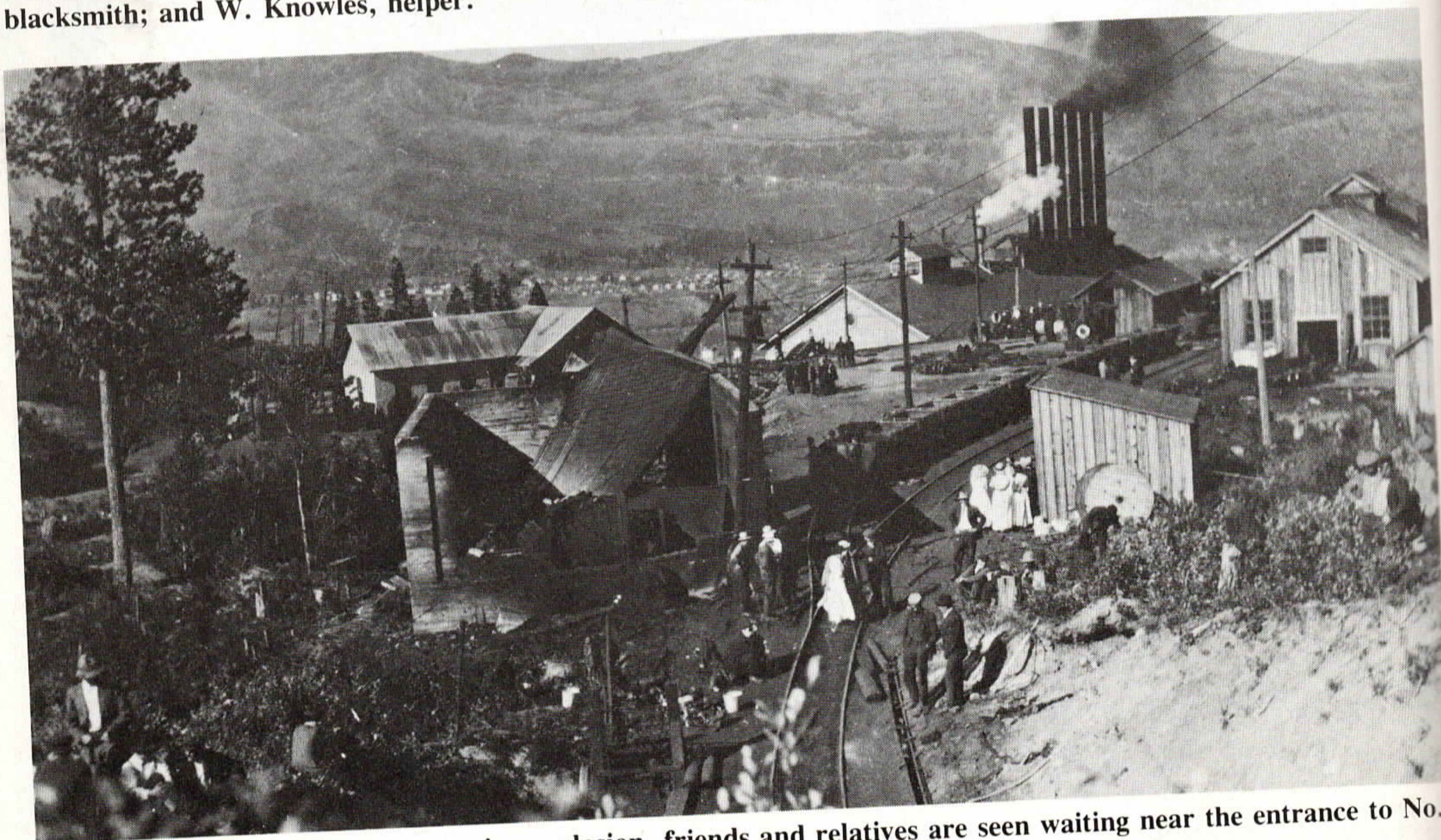


Brule was a company town operated by Blue Diamond Coal Mines. Seen here is their blacksmith shop in the early 1920's. The town was later dismantled.





Men posed in front of West Canadian Collieries' mine entrance, power house and blacksmith shop at Bellevue in 1905. Left to right are: W. Jepson, mechanic; J. Ashcroft, engineer; W.H. Chappell, Jr., helper; G. Knowles, blacksmith; and W. Knowles, helper.



The day after the tragic Hillcrest mine explosion, friends and relatives are seen waiting near the entrance to No. 2 mine. A total of 198 men were killed in the disaster which took place on June 18, 1914.





This view of Luscar, a mining town in the Coal Branch area, shows the cleaning plant at centre in the 1930's. The townsite was razed and levelled in 1963.



Miners work with cutting equipment at the coal face in the Leitch Collieries at Passburg. The collieries operated from 1907 to 1915.





One of the earliest mining areas in Alberta was in the Belly River region. Above is an 1881 view of a mine entrance near the future site of Lethbridge.



Miners prepare to go underground at the Edmonton Coal Company's mine.





This massive coal face at Cadomin gives some indication of Alberta's coal reserves. The view was taken in October 1946.



Dynamite was used in this strip mining operation during World War Two.



# Missions and Schools In the Athabasca

By

JOHN W. CHALMERS

TODAY, when almost every aspect of Alberta's school system is subject to provincial regulation and control, 19th century education in the Athabasca country appears to have operated in a governmental vacuum. And very nearly it did.

Until 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company was the government, *de facto* and *de jure*, of Rupert's Land and the vaguely defined "Indian country" beyond, the latter including the fur trade realm known as "the Athabasca." The latter may be defined as the basins of the Athabasca, Peace, and Great Slave Rivers east of the Rockies. Here as elsewhere and for its own purposes, the Company somewhat unenthusiastically supported missions and mission schools. This support included financial aid, transportation of missionaries and their effects, hospitality — often for extended periods — at fur posts, and other assistance. However, the Company kept its corporate hands off the operation of both the missions and their schools, requiring only that they in no way interfere with the business of the fur trade.

In 1870, the Company's vast realms became part of the fledgling Dominion of Canada. At first in the North-West Territories there was little federal presence; in the Athabasca, practically none. Not until 1875 was there a North-West Territories Act, nor was there any resident governor or council until 1876. Even then, this rudimentary government was slow to enter the education field. In 1881 it began making grants to mission and other schools. Four years later it established the first school districts but only where settlement provided an adequate tax base to support the schools. Certainly this circumstance did not prevail in the Athabasca country.

There was, however, another authority with a finger in the educational pie. By the BNA Act, only the provinces (and by extension the territories) were to have jurisdiction over education. But Indian affairs were federal concerns and by tacit agreement, these were deemed to include Indian education. Thus in the Athabasca, federal and territorial

governments each bore some educational responsibility, responsibility which neither cared to meet.

Regina's bland disregard of northern education was matched by Ottawa's equally inouciant attitude. In the Fertile Belt, the first seven Indian treaties, negotiated, or rather imposed from 1871 to 1877, the federal government promised to supply the Indians with schools and teachers, a promise it was quite unable to fulfill. There was no Indian Affairs Branch until 1873, no Indian Act before 1876. Ottawa had neither adequate legislation, experience, nor personnel to deal with the complex problems of education. In the treaty areas the federal government simply turned the whole problem over to the churches, quite niggardly subsidizing the operation of their schools. Otherwise its only concern with Indian education was occasional and rather perfunctory medical inspection of the pupils and the sanitary conditions prevailing in the institutions. In the non-treaty areas, including the Athabasca, even this minimum federal presence came close to the vanishing point. But not quite. Occasionally, and on an *ad hoc* basis it did make meagre grants to at least some of the schools.

Although the Anglican church had been active in the Red River valley since 1820, it had neither the financial nor human resources to expand west and north until its Diocese of Rupert's Land was created in 1849. Meanwhile the Roman Catholics were busy establishing missions at the readily-accessible fur posts along the North Saskatchewan and the Upper Mackenzie basin. But the Lower Mackenzie and Yukon basins were still virgin territory, and to these the Anglicans turned their attention. Thus in 1858-59, Archdeacon James Hunter visited Fort Simpson, Fort Norman, and Fort Good Hope. Soon others followed. Once established on the Mackenzie, in defiance of geography the Anglican Church penetrated the

Dr. Chalmers is a noted Alberta author, his most recent book being *Laird of the West*, a biography of the Hon. David Laird.





In the foreground of this 1892 painting is a view of the Anglican mission at Fort Chipewyan.

Athabasca country from the north rather than from the south.

The Rev. W.C. Bompas was the first Church of England clergyman to make regular pastoral visits to that territory. Between 1867 and 1873 he journeyed several times to Fort Chipewyan. The spring of 1871 found him at Fond du Lac; in the fall he had travelled as far south and west as Fort Dunvegan. The following winter he spent at Fort Vermilion.

The year 1873 saw the creation, with Bompas as bishop, of the Diocese of Athabasca, stretching approximately from the Athabasca River to the Arctic Ocean. It also witnessed the establishment of the first permanent Anglican mission in the Athabasca, that of St. Paul the Apostle at Fort Chipewyan, and the beginning of a quarter century of slow and sometimes unsteady development.

In 1874, St. Luke's mission was established at Fort Vermilion; five years later, St. Savior's at Fort Dunvegan came into existence. For five months of 1880 there was a mission at Fort McMurray. By 1882 the Shaftsbury Mission, near Peace River Landing, was in operation. In 1883 the bishopric was divided and the Diocese of Athabasca was limited to the area roughly between the Athabasca River and Parallel 60. Rt. Rev. Richard Young became its new bishop; his headquarters were at Fort Vermilion.

The late 1880s saw farther southward movement and the first real penetration of that *terra incognita* between the Peace and the Athabasca Rivers. In 1886 the Anglicans established St. Peter's at the HBC Lesser Slave Lake Post. In the same year they were holding services at Forts McMurray and Smith.

Forays to the interior of the unknown land were henceforth made from two directions. The Rev. M. Scott, of Fort Vermilion, began regular sorties in 1887 up the Paddle, Little Red, and Loon (Wabasca) Rivers. From St. Peter's the Rev. George Holmes travelled north and east in 1888 to Whitefish (Atikameg), Wabasca (Wabiskow), and Graham (Trout) Lakes, and west to Sturgeon Lake. The following year saw the establishment of St. Andrew's Mission at Whitefish. In 1891, however, because of the decreasing number of Indians and absence of white settlers, St. Savior's at Fort Dunvegan closed its doors. The year 1894 saw the creation of St. John's at Wabasca and St. Matthew's at Athabasca Landing, to which point Bishop Young moved the diocesan chancery the same year.

Thus in 30 years the Anglicans had established a presence throughout the Athabasca country, not only along the great peripheral waterways but at virtually all the interior communities as well. Nor was it only churches that they had founded. As with all denominations, an Anglican mission normally



consisted of both church and school. The objectives of the two were identical: the spiritual development of all the people. They were like the two wings of the dove of Christianity. Thus schools were established, usually almost simultaneously with the churches, as at Forts Chipewyan, Vermilion, McMurray, Lesser Slave Lake, Wabasca and Athabasca Landing. Sometimes these little temples of learning began as day schools, but usually they became residential institutions. The one at Fort Vermilion was planned as a school where the boys were to be taught agricultural skills and the girls were to learn to be farmers' wives. But realization fell short of aspiration, and eventually the industrial school became a more conventional institution.

Who were the teachers of these wilderness schools? What were they like? Qualified as they may have been by personality and temperament (and not all of them were), they were completely untrained in the art of craft of teaching. Many were young men on their way to ordination. For them, teaching was a sometime thing, to be abandoned as soon as they entered Holy Orders. Some of these teachers-becoming-clergymen were: A.C. Garrioch at Fort Vermilion, 1875 to 1886; George Holmes at Lesser Slave Lake, 1886 to 1888; James R. Lucas at Lesser Slave Lake, 1891 to 1893; A.J. Warwick at Fort Vermilion, 1893 to 1895; W.G. White at Whitefish Lake, 1894 to 1896; C.D. White at Athabasca Landing, 1899 to 1900; and A.S. White at Whitefish Lake, 1897 to 1921.

Some male teachers such as W.S. Melrose and Percy Muller did not become clergymen. Nor did ordination always mean an end to educational duties. Indeed, the Anglicans rather favoured the appointment of priests as principals of their larger schools.

Anglican female teachers tended to be almost as closely associated with their church as were their male colleagues. In the Diocese of Athabasca they included wives, sisters, and daughters of priests. Among them were Julia, daughter of the Rev. Malcolm Scott; Mary, sister of the Rev. A.S. White; Mrs. J.R. Lucas; Eliza (Mrs. George) Holmes; Julia (Mrs. Richard) Young; and her daughters Una, Eirene, and Juliet. Some of these estimable ladies were perhaps residence matrons rather than classroom teachers, but the differences in qualifications and duties between the two were minimal.

Although Roman Catholic clergymen had arrived at Red River by 1818, over 20 years were to

elapse before the church was able to move out of the valley. In 1844, Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault established at Lac Ste. Anne a mission which eventually was to become the base for the Roman Catholic advance to the Athabasca. However, that expansion did not occur until 1854 under the Oblates, Fathers Albert Lacombe and Rene Remas. In that year they founded the mission at Lac La Biche to counter the threat created by the activities of the Wesleyan Henry Bird Steinhauer, who soon started a school at that point. In 1855, Fathers Jean Tissot and Augustin Maisonneuve were stationed at Lac La Biche. Two years later this Oblate contingent was strengthened by the arrival of two lay brothers, and in 1862 by the coming of Grey Nuns from Montreal.

From Lac La Biche the Oblates moved east to Isle a la Crosse and Reindeer Lake, and north to Fort Chipewyan, which Father Alexandre Tache had visited in 1874. In 1849, Father Henri Faraud came to Chipewyan to stay; three years later Father Henri Grollier joined him. Their Nativity Mission was located about a mile west of the fort. In 1855, when Tache, by then Bishop of St. Boniface, visited the place, the Oblates had schools in operation at both the fort and the mission. Faraud was definitely not happy about the 1858 coming of the Anglicans. In 1874, three Grey Nuns from Fort Providence arrived at the Nativity Mission, where they established a hostel for orphaned and abandoned Indian children.

For the first several years these sisters underwent hardships impossible to conceive a century later. Nevertheless, in their first year they accepted 13 pupils at what was to become the Holy Angels residential school. Not until 1895 did it receive federal financial assistance, \$200 per year per child, Indian or Metis without distinction.

The Nativity Mission became not only an outpost of the Roman Catholic Church; it was also a base, as was St. John the Apostle for the Anglicans, for expansion both east and west. From 1853, Father Grollier and other priests regularly visited Fond du Lac, but not until 1875 was a permanent incumbent stationed there.

Beginning in 1845, Fathers Thibault, Lacombe, and Faraud visited the Peace River country. In 1886 Father Christopher Tissier established St. Charles Mission at Fort Dunvegan, closed in 1903 or 1904. But in 1888 it was the base from which St. Augustine Mission was erected near the mouth of the Smoky River. Ultimately it became a residential school.





The Catholic church and mission buildings at Fort Chipewyan are seen here in an 1899 view. The building at right is the Oblate House.

Closer to Fort Chipewyan, St. Henri Mission was established at Fort Vermilion in 1876. Eventually it also boasted a residential school. From there other missions were erected: St. Louis at North Vermilion, Ste. Bernadette at Eleshe for the Beavers, St. Michael the Archangel at Carcajou, St. Jude at Keg River, Christ the King at Paddle Prairie, and one at Tall Cree for the Crees there.

As with the Anglicans, the Roman Catholics were slower to missionize the southern than the northern reaches of the Athabasca country. A natural objective was Lesser Slave Lake and its nearby Buffalo Bay, really a small lake. The first Catholic missionaries to visit the area were Fathers Joseph Bourassa in 1845, Father Albert Lacombe in 1855, and Father Rene Remas in 1864. Shortly thereafter, Remas' mission became permanent, dedicated to St. Bernard.

*Bishop Tache had asked that each resident missionary should teach school to the children as time allowed, and the Indian and Metis people agreed to send their children to school.*

*At Grouard (on the east side of Buffalo Bay) the first school in the proper sense of the word was opened by Father Desmarais in the autumn of 1886. It accepted as day pupils both boys and girls and there was a small dormitory for boys alone. Father Desmarais . . . was*

*the first teacher at Grouard, but in August 1888, Bishop Faraud obtained the services of an Irish brother, Brother Ryan. According to the Chronicles, the children slept on the floor as they did in their own homes and were served the simplest of food.*

*About the same time in 1886 the Anglican Minister Reverend Holmes . . . established a Mission on Lesser Slave Lake . . . He also taught school for awhile, but having very few pupils, he left Lesser Slave Lake Fort and opened a Mission on the other side of Buffalo Bay . . .*

In 1890, Father Falher and Brother Ryan opened St. Antoine Mission, also on the west side of Buffalo Bay. Both Anglican and Catholic missions included schools, which survived until the Sisters of Providence came to St. Bernard's in 1894.

Other early "daughters" of St. Bernard were St. Benoit at Atikameg in 1890 — missionaries had visited this point since 1881 — and St. Martin, on South Lake Wabasca in 1897. The latter soon gave rise to the community of Desmarais, named for the priest who had visited the area since 1891. At both points the Catholics opened schools, competing with the Anglicans, as elsewhere, for adherents and pupils, and much more successfully. The 1896 census of the Athabasca district lists only 194 Anglican Indians as against 3,056 Catholics.



By the end of the 19th century, in the Athabasca country, the favoured Indian educational institution had become the residential school, which was to endure until the early 1960s. But by the mid-1970s it had disappeared, to be replaced by the day school.

For many reasons, both churches had favoured the residential institutions. They guaranteed virtual 100 percent attendance, unless a child was sick. They made it feasible to control pupils' cleanliness of body and clothes, and their minor ailments. Under the guise of teaching farming and domestic skills, the children's labour cut food costs.

But most important from the missionaries' viewpoint, these schools effectively isolated the children from the pagan and allegedly uncivilized environment of their native culture. The schools were unimpeded in their efforts towards integrating the children completely into the dominant white society. However, what was the greatest virtue in the eyes of the missionaries was their most serious fault in the view of the parents: that they were far too effective in deculturating their pupils. When the

children left the schools, they could not longer fit into tribal culture. Frequently they could no longer speak the language of their parents. And often they came home in worse physical shape than when they left, for the schools were notorious as breeding grounds for tuberculosis. Nor did the schools fulfill their implicit promise that they would give the native child a toehold in the white man's world.

Between them, the two churches were successful in bringing Christianity to the Indians of the Athabasca, but at a cost.

*The competitions between the churches, expressed in endless itinerations between posts and camps, races to steal marches on one another, hasty baptisms to establish claims over Indians and Eskimos, and denigrating the motives and characters of their rivals were features of the religious picture in much of northern Canada in the final third of the nineteenth century. No doubt competition speeded up and increased the facilities provided for the inhabitants, but it also created divisions within bands, undermined established lines of authority, and sometimes encouraged appeals to unworthy motives that heaped discredit upon the work of organized religion.*<sup>2</sup>



Men haul logs to the Catholic mission on Buffalo Bay at Lesser Slave Lake at the turn of the century.

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### MAIL SERVICE

Complaints are frequently made by the settlers in the district south of Lethbridge about the inadequacy of their present mail service. The people of Cardston, which is now a large and thriving village and the centre of a well settled district in which there are several smaller villages, have only a weekly mail service, and the settlers living on Pot Hole have to come to Lethbridge for their mail, a distance of from 17 to 25 miles.

The manner in which the Cardston mail is carried is also unsatisfactory. Instead of being pushed through as rapidly as possible in a light and fast travelling vehicle, it is carried in a heavy waggon which necessitates a two days' journey between Cardston and Lethbridge. The southern settlements are steadily growing all the time and new villages are gradually springing up. Already there are two other post offices which receive their mail from Cardston, and a third will shortly be required. Under these circumstances the settlers feel that they are entitled to a better mail service than they now receive.

It is not enough for the government to endeavour to bring settlers into the Territories, but if they desire to retain those who do come in they should also endeavour to supply them as far as possible with the conveniences of life. It is perfectly possible that if the people of Cardston were given a semi-weekly mail and only one day allowed for the trip each way, it might in the immediate present cost the government more than the southern post offices bring in. But that is neither here or there. An expenditure of this kind will in the end amply repay the government. Not only would it assist in keeping in the country those who have already settled in it, but it would also assist in inducing others to come into a country where they see that the convenience of settlers is thought of and considered by the government.

It is earnestly to be hoped that the new Post Master General will give this matter careful attention and will view it in a generous and broad-minded way. The settlement of the country is of more importance than that the receipts of the Postal Department should equal its expenditure, and no one would grumble at a slight increase in the expenditure of that department when it is for the benefit of settlers and the encouragement of immigration.

— Lethbridge Herald, July 29, 1896



# Pioneer Policeman

By

SHEILAGH S. JAMESON

AS A SNOWSTORM of blizzard proportions swept down into what is now the south-west corner of Alberta on Feb. 9, 1883, it overtook a solitary figure driving a horse and cutter and travelling eastward. This man, seemingly the only human being in that vastness of swirling white, was a young Mounted Police constable, William Metzler, who had been out on patrol and was returning to his detachment on St. Mary's River not far from the present town of Cardston.

In his diary entry for February 11, he tells the story.<sup>1</sup>

*Feb. 11th. Got back here at last after being out three days and two nights. I left [Kootenai] Brown's camp for here on the 9th. Got a couple of miles away from there when it started to storm and as I was travelling across country without any trail and the storm so bad, I could not see twenty yards ahead of me or anywhere else. Any way I kept my direction as well as I could and made Lee's Creek about seven miles above the trail but on account of the Coulees I had to strike back from it about three miles on the Prairie again and had to camp out that night. I dug a hole in the snow and put the only blanket which was a horse blanket around me. I slept as well as I could for the cold.*

*The next morning I started again and made the St. Mary's river about twelve miles from the shack which I mistook for Lee's Creek and drove the horse and jumper down a cut bank onto it with the intention of following it down to the crossing but as soon as I got on the river I knew it was the St. Mary's and started to follow it up but the Ice was so slippery the horse could not walk on it so I had to get up on the Prairie again and in going around some Coulees I lost my direction altogether so I knocked about all day and stopped in a Coulee that night where I came near staying for good. I dug a hole in a snow bank and laid down to try and take a nap but the mouth drifted shut and I had hard work kicking out, so I took the blanket and lay on the level and let the snow drift over me till morning when it cleared up a little and I saw old Chief Mountain. I left the jumper and oats where they were, got on the horse's back and made for the shack [St. Mary's detachment] which I made about three o'clock this afternoon with my face, hands and feet slightly frozen and an empty gut as I had nothing to eat except oats all the time I was out.*

William Hay Metzler, a young Nova Scotian of United Empire Loyalist stock, was just 20 when he joined the North-West Mounted Police and headed west. His diary begins with his trip to Fort Walsh, a journey via the Missouri River-Fort Ben-

ton route, including travel by rail, lake steamer, riverboat, and finally wagon train which lasted from May 23 to June 25, 1880.

Metzler was at Fort Walsh on Jan. 29, 1881, when the famous Cree chief Piapot demanded entrance to the fort and when refused angrily "threw up the treaty flag and papers with threats that we would suffer for it."

Again Metzler tells of Indian unrest later that year.

*August 8th. Were not allowed outside of the Barracks on account of the Indians threatening actions so as to be in readiness in case of need.*

*August 9th. Indians still the same. All of us were ordered to dress in uniform in case we would be needed. Colonel Irvine and Cpt. Cotton with twenty of us rode up to camp. Found the Indians all riding around and firing off their guns. The Colonel gave them a talking to.*

*August 11th. All hands turned out on full dress parade after which we were all put on fatigue carrying oats out of the Bastions so as it could be used in case of need as they expect an attack from Little Pine and his band as they have been kind of cross grained for some time back.*

The expected attack didn't come and Cst. Metzler was sent to Fort Macleod a short time later to serve on the escort of the Marquis of Lorne. He wrote:

*Sept. 17th. The Marquis reached here this morning. Was one of the guard of honour to him when he arrived. Then I was put on guard with another one of the Boys over the place where he stopped and slept.*

*Sept. 19th. Taken off guard and sent on the escort across the Line to an American post Fort Shaw. Reached there on the 27th. Stopped there two days. On the second day he [the Marquis of Lorne] had us paraded and made a speech, after which he left with an American escort for Helena where he was to take the train. A lot of us mounted and went about five miles on the road with him where he shook hands with all of us. We then left for home again, after having a good time and plenty of whiskey.*

The author was longtime Chief Archivist for the Glenbow Museum and is author of the book *Chautauqua in Canada*. This article is based upon William Metzler's diary, which was donated to the Glenbow Archives in 1971 by Metzler's son, a Pincher Creek rancher who also is named William.



The trip back to Fort Macleod proved to be a difficult one.

*Oct. 5th. Reached Macleod after a pretty hard trip having snow or rain nearly every night. We had to scrape the snow or mud away to make our beds down and then turned in just as we were. I only had my boots off twice on the whole trip and that at Shaw.*

On another instance when Metzler spoke of whiskey the occasion was rather different. He was sent in to Fort Macleod in February, 1884, and one day's entry reads, "Got a bottle of whiskey from Cpt. Cotton, and Sgt. Shaw hauled my teeth out for me." The next day was one of mixed feelings also: "Got some more whiskey and had some of the roots taken out." About two months later he stated laconically, "Got a set of teeth — \$30.00."

Metzler was stationed variously at Fort Walsh, Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, and at detachments on St. Mary's River and in the Crow's Nest Pass. His duties particularly at the two last named points involved the pursuit of smugglers and customs work, including checking cattle and horses coming into the country.

He left descriptions of chases after horse rustlers, including an exciting night ride in the Crow's Nest Pass area. Quite naturally references to horses appear on practically every page of his diary, for the horse was very much a part of the life a Mounted Policeman. Horses had strayed or stampeded, saddle horses had to be shod, horses were stolen or they died, hay had to be hauled to feed horses, horses were broken to saddle or harness — indeed, many graphic descriptions of riding bucking broncos colour his daily recordings.

Then there are smugglers and liquor caches. On one occasion Metzler observed that they had "caught two fellows smuggling whiskey." He continued:

*Jan. 26th. The two chaps were tried. They got a fine of two hundred dollars or one year apiece but they paid their fine. They also lost their horses and the rest of their truck.*

*Jan. 27th. The Q.M.S. spilt about fifty gallons of the whiskey as that is the order to have it all spilt but as there happened to be some snow where he spilt it the boys soon gathered it up and took it into the kitchen and made punch of it.*

Metzler wrote at times of dances, or more often balls, given by the Police. On June 7, 1882, at Fort Macleod their ball was attended by eight white ladies which "made it seem quite like Civilization." A short time later they gave another ball and "sent a team up to Pincher Creek for some white Ladies,"

which brought the total up to about fifteen. There were, of course, Metis and Indian women too, and about 150 people sat down to supper, "which made quite a crowd."

Other forms of entertainment were sports, including horse races, and on several occasions a dramatic group of the troop in Fort Macleod put on performances.

One of the most dramatic events in Western Canadian history was the Riel Rebellion of 1885. William Metzler was at Pincher Creek at this time. His diary entry for March 27th reads.

*Corporal More went after a fellow for stealing a horse yesterday evening and about one o'clock last night Sergt. Spicer came here with order for one of us and two horses to go into the Fort [Macleod] and also for me to go over to the Kootenai and tell the boys there to go into the Fort with all their horses as the Indians and Half Breeds had turned loose at Prince Albert and most likely all the men would have to go there. I got over to the Kootenai about four o'clock this morning and as I had two of my horses and a waggon there I brought them back with me and got home about 6 this evening after a pretty hard day's work and am keeping them here till I get out.*

On April 5th and 6th he wrote:

*April 5th. Two of the Boys arrived here this morning at day break with orders to try and get any men and their horses they could to go into the Fort [Macleod] to strengthen the post as there is great alarm felt on account of the Indians who they expect to break out any moment. The settlers around here are also pretty well alarmed. They have held a few meetings and also asked for arms and ammunition from the Fort so as to defend themselves in case of need. Everything looks pretty black around at present.*

*April 6th. A dispatch came from the Fort for us both to go in at once and as we only had one Government horse we started on my own two about five this evening and got within five miles of the Fort when we met Derenzie with another dispatch for us to turn back and remain at the Creek and reported everything quiet there. We got back here about four o'clock this morning.*

On April 15, Metzler noted that "the civilians have formed a volunteer corps." There are no further comments for two weeks:

*May 1st. Everything quiet around here except some of the chaps getting full on cider. We finished putting a stockade around the old Government farm buildings so as to have some place in case of need to put the women and children and also to give us a show to stand the Indians off if it comes too tough.*

On June 24th, 1885, Constable Metzler, having completed his five year term of service in the Force, took his discharge. His brief entry is typical.

*June 24th. We got in here [Fort Macleod] last night and this morning I got my walking papers and started right back for the Creek and rounded up my horses.*



Like many another ex-Mounted Policemen, Metzler took up a homestead. His diary notations then became more brief and occasional. The last one, dated Nov. 19, 1885, reads "Have been plowing and working at the logs for the house."

No doubt his background of Mounted Police work proved useful to William Metzler in his new life, for he ranched in the Pincher Creek area until his retirement in 1951. He was married in 1903 and he and his wife celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1953. He died in 1954 at the age of 95.

### STAGE DRIVERS

Those who frequently say they would like to drive a stage generally form their impressions during the warm and balmy weather of the summer months, when there is no danger of freezing to death and there are no obstacles to smooth sailing. About the first cold makes them calculate that the stage driver has not such a soft snap after all, and they are just about right.

There is no occupation in the world that looks more easy and pleasant at times, and there is none which at other times is more difficult or that requires more care, genuine courage and good management. In the summer, the weather is warm and the rivers easily crossed. When the first cold weather comes, the hills are slippery and the river mean, and then it is that the stage driver requires all the self possession, nerve and skill that nature may have endowed him with. All the routes going out of Macleod are difficult ones to drive over at such a time. All these routes are fortunate in possessing careful and skilful drivers.

At the head of the list of Northwest drivers, Frank Pollinger reigns supreme. Frank is known and admired from Winnipeg to the Rocky Mountains, and north as far as Frenchman's Butte, where he took part in that memorable battle. He has driven over nearly all the four and six horse stage routes in the Western States, where his reputation is just as high as it is here. Every horse in his team knows him, and a word from him is as good as a club in the average driver's hands. Frank is a deserved favorite, and the average passenger considers himself in good luck if he gets a seat alongside of him — except in cold and stormy weather, when Polly generally has to hold it down alone unless there is a full house.

All the others are good drivers and good fellows. The stage driver has generally a very keen sense of his duty. He will always do more for his employers and his horses than he will for himself. The last trip in from Benton, the driver got into difficulty in the river at Frank Strong's Crossing. With the thermometer down below zero, he worked in water nearly up to his waist for some two hours. Without getting dry or warm, he came straight through to Macleod, arriving after dark in the evening, and encased in a solid mass of ice. Even then he delivered his mail and would not stir from his seat until he had made every endeavor to report to the collector of customs. It was a long time before he could thaw out his clothes sufficiently to get them off.

Yes, stage driving looks pretty when everything is favorable, but the man who undertakes it in winter and "gets there" is none of your ordinary kind of man but is stamped with a superiority which only requires the opportunity to make him a hero. All honor to him! He may be a hard case but his thousand and one virtues and good qualities cover a multitude of faults.

— The Macleod Gazette, November 23, 1886





# A Tribute to the Red River Cart

by

JOHN MACLEAN

*In 1889, while serving as Methodist missionary at Neepawa, Manitoba, Maclean penned this tribute which was published under the pseudonym of Strathclyde Winnipeg Free Press on April 22nd. Maclean had come west in 1880 as a missionary to the Blood Indians in southern Alberta and had remained there until 1889, when his first book, The Indians of Canada, was published. Later, as he moved to various parishes in the West, he published numerous books and articles on Indians and missionaries.*

HOW OFTEN I wish I were a child again, but alas my brow is furrowed with care and my locks are white. I cannot tell how it is that the forward look is gone, and I am living in the old past, thinking of the early days on the prairie, the lodges and shanties, the buffalo and the Red River cart.

I feel at home with the old things, for they seem to have left their pictures in my heart and as the old cart is a native of the West it has become a part of myself. Let others write and sing of the great things of history, the doings of kings and nations, but give to me the lowly task of telling about the common things which lie at our feet. The memory

of the old cart makes me young again, and I am following the narrow trail with a western fondness, for every step brings up images of weather-beaten faces and kind hearts, which are more than coronets, and from every footprint a voice is heard singing the lays of the prairie and mountain with a sweetness that is mellowed with the years.

The Red River cart! Mention its name and you are transported to a period in the history of the world as important as any other age. The particular locality may not have as many heroes and stirring events recorded on the printed page, yet it has its own heroic age, its tragedies and comedies which were of greater consequences to some persons than the wars of the Roses, and the great deeds of the heroes of Greece and Rome.

The old cart is a denizen of the prairie; other countries may claim the like but it is alone in construction and historical associations. The Red River cart is unique in name and influence. If Gulliver

Above is a view of a Red River cart in Winnipeg, sketched during a visit of the Marquis of Lorne in 1881.



had visited the West, what stories he would have written when once his eyes were fastened upon this sacred thing. The ploughman poet of Ayrshire or the poet of the gentle craft of St. Crispin would have found a theme for their pen and happy men and ladies would have sung the ballads in the genial summer time.

It was a simple cart of wood, its shafts and wheels hewn with the axe of the lowly half-breed from the timber in the forest, and the inelegant box fashioned into shape with saw and draw-knife; a primitive wagon, made to endure without any pretensions of beauty. No tough sinews of iron fresh from the shrill anvil and glowing forge fretted the frame as nerves and muscles, and no painful smith bound with hoops of iron the hesitating wheel. The bolts and nails were of nature's growth, fashioned by the amateur wheelwright from the hardest wood, the green hide of the buffalo bound the wheels, invincible tires of shaganappi.

How that word glistens as I write and what a history lies imbedded in it. Shaganappi! Speak the word in any country and I am suddenly transported to the prairies. Again I see the buffalo, the Indian lodges, the strange tongues of the natives fall upon my ear, and I am scouring the plains on my

favourite cayuse. There is history in every word. A single word has brought nations face to face in battle, theological controversies have waged around it, institutions have been founded up on it and it has become the shibboleth of political and religious sects. It stands as the symbol of an age or religion, the name of nature and the Supreme Man.

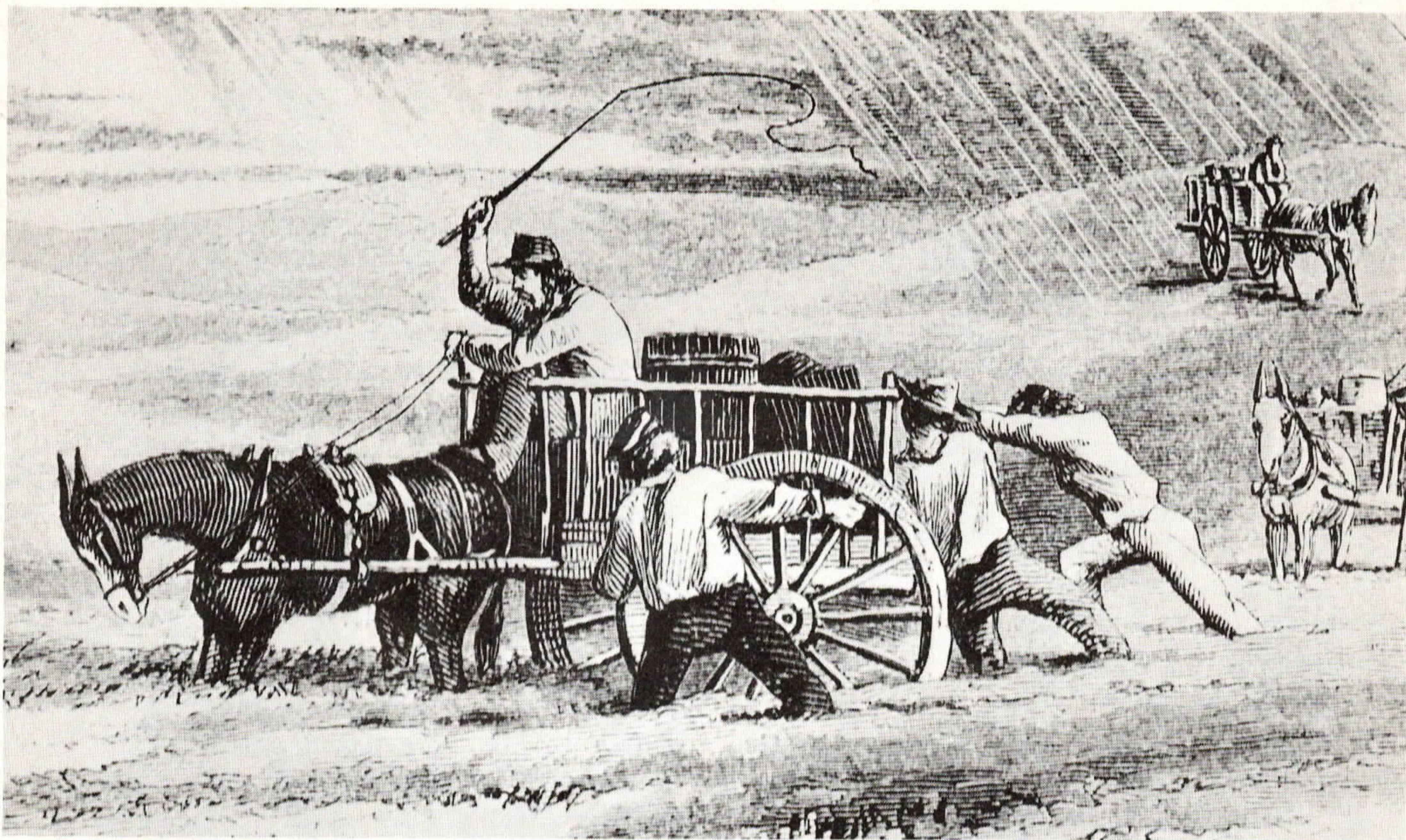
My primitive wagon is not an apple-cart nor a dust-cart; it is not a mail-cart nor an ice-cart; it is not a village cart nor an ash-cart; it is not a hand-cart nor a dump-cart. It is a Red River cart and nothing more. I would not change its name according to the fashion of the day, for then it would lose its significance and history, and there are some things and some men who are worthless when you remove them from their surroundings. But leave them in their true place and they are all important to themselves and other folk.

Westward toward the mountains and away toward the wide-rolling Saskatchewan, the half-breeds journeyed until they reached the forts. Distance lent fascination with increase of pay and loneliness was forgotten in the freedom and pleasure of the trip. How easily we become adapted to our surroundings with the promise of reward. The Arctic has no terrors for the hunter after gold, the



Metis used a Red River cart to secure an oxen for shoeing. This sketch was made in 1874 by Henri Julien during the westward march of the NWMP.





Red River carts persevered through all types of terrain and weather, as shown by the 1859 engraving of a cart stuck in the mud near Pembina.

stormy northern seas yield their joys in the prospects of seals, and Darkest Continent is illuminated with the assurance of wealth, and the hidden depths of the ocean become treasure houses of pearls and sponges.

Creak and groan, groan and creak, the old cart is singing on its passage across the prairie with mingled agony and laughter at the shadows, the buffalo bones, the birds, and the flowers. For many years the cracked voice of the old cart has been singing its weary song with none to listen but the tawny-faced master and an occasional passerby. There is no doubt that the song was pleasing to itself, as the old man loves to hear his own voice though others may not care for his song. How often I have wished that some musical genius could have heard the chanting of the cart and transcribed the music for the good of posterity. But there are songs that never have been written as true as human voices have ever sung.

Each cart has its own musical quality as each nation, stage of civilization, and individual has its own respective tone, note and scale. One cart has a deep bass voice and another is a fine tenor. One resembles a cathedral organ, another is like a fiddle, and another has the tinkling sound of a pair of brass cymbals.

There were none who could interpret the music of the cart so well as the man who kept fellowship

with it all over the monotonous plains. Once in a while in a merry mood, a hardy half-breed mounted the vehicle — having caught the key-note — and sang a song of the prairie, like Thespis who “at country wakes sung ballads from a cart.” The song may have changed with the burden — as all songs do — at any rate, the note was charged with the contents of pemmican, tea and guns.

The gypsies of the prairie are the Egyptians of the West, the Metis of other days. The melancholy eye of the men and the beauty full and fine of the young women lent a charm to their unpoetic life. The romantic habits of these western nomads have not yet been fully described. The world is still waiting for the Liszt to immortalize their music, and a Scott and Barrow to give them their true place in history and poetry.

A Metis poet? Yes, there is abundant material for thrilling romance, love songs and a great poem, and there may be sheltered in one of the lodges a sturdy youngster biding his time, who will some day stir our hearts with song and story, and preserve the glorious deeds of the heroes of an effete civilization. What tales these men have told in French, Cree and English, as with careless gait they walked by the cart brigade across the plains and at the close of the day, gathered in one of the lodges around the cheerful fire, and renewed the thrilling stories of love and war.





The Red River cart, carrying its Metis owners from place to place, was viewed by the author as a phenomenon unique to the western prairies. Above is a family near Winnipeg in 1879.



All goes not well even in times of peace. The strongest cart must have its time of sickness, as robust men need to be laid aside for contemplation and rest. An extra groan and a crash and the line of carts is stopped to mend the broken cart and it is well if there is timber near. But if not, the resourceful shaganappi is at hand to repair the invalid. There might be sadness on the faces, were it not that the western gypsy is at home on the prairie and happy wherever night may find him.

In the glowing sunset the children sport themselves in frantic delight, running in the soft carpet of nature making with feet toughened by wind and weather. When darkness has fallen, be still and listen, for there is a woman's voice and the tone is plaintive. The voices of the children are heard softly following the pleading of the mother. Look down, ye angels upon this prairie scene, worthy of the brush of a master artist, a picture which Raphael, De Vinci or Millet might covet to immortalize on canvas. It is prayer time in the lodge of the halfbreed, a season of solemnity for the angels and God are near. The scene of Jacob and the angel has been repeated on the prairie in these modern times.

Wistful eyes look out upon the plains from the old fort for the coming of the carts. There is a scarcity of some goods, friends are anxious to renew acquaintances, and expectation deepens as reports of Indian parties come in. The time of arrival is long past due and the feeling of uneasiness becomes intense, but at last a dark speck on the horizon is seen, glasses are pointed toward the object, and there is satisfaction on the face of the observer. Home at last, the voyage is ended and there is joy in the fort and in the village.

The old cart still lingers among us, a relic of other days, but the day is near when the last cart will collapse suddenly, universally and unremedial. Farewell, ye poor old thing, there is sorrow in my heart that soon I shall see thee no more, nor listen to thy liting on the prairie. It is best, for the stranger is within our gates and with the love of progress he would not suffer thy presence, but would scowl upon thee and bother thy frail body. The city has come, the locomotive is here, and the Red River cart had fled. You may find a stray skeleton but the race has almost perished.

### A Sulphur Spring

Two suspicious looking earthen jars adorn the office of Gen. Superintendant Egan. They contain water from a sulphur spring recently discovered in the mountains near Banff, a station on the Canadian Pacific. A vast volume of escaping vapor led to the discovery of the spring, which is fully one thousand feet above the level of the ground. The average temperature of the water is 70 degrees and it is strongly impregnated with sulphur. Some distance back of this spring is another in which the water has a temperature of 204 degrees and is therefore entirely too warm to admit of ones bathing in it.

The first mentioned spring is about 30 feet under the ground, and is reached by a ladder, through an apperture dug by some curiously inclined individual. Having been greatly benefited by frequent baths, the discoverer made known the fact and already numbers of people have taken advantage of the wonderful medicinal properties of the water with surprising beneficial results. In fact, some enthusiasts declare that a rival has been found for Hot Springs, and if as alleged the water has such curative powers, an opportunity presents itself for some enterprising speculator to enrich himself by erecting a sanitarium. Throughout the year the grass near the spring is green.

— Winnipeg Daily Times, April 18, 1885



# Western Bookshelf

**A Flannel Shirt & Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914**, edited by Susan Jackel. Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press. 257 pp. illus. paper. \$21.95. *Reviewed by Sheilagh S. Jameson, Calgary.*

In this book Susan Jackel explores an aspect of prairie settlement which has been largely neglected, that of the experiences, the personal and social effects and implications of the western settlement of British women of the "privileged" classes. This she does through the writings of the women themselves.

In her introduction she sets the stage by a brief description of conditions in England with relation to the large domination of unmarried women, especially gentlewomen, who as dependents without working skills have become a social problem. At the same time "in Canada, the marriage and labour markets combined to offer such women opportunities denied them at home" — here the preponderance of men to women could range as high as 20 to one. The solution was logical, bring in sufficient British women to relieve the unbalanced situation in both countries. In actual fact this seemingly simple remedy was extremely complicated. Nevertheless British gentlewomen came to the prairies in numbers. The difficulties they encountered and the rewards they earned are indicated in the documents which the editor selected.

The main body of the book is arranged in time periods, "The Beginning: The 1880s," "The Doldrums: The 1890s" and "The Wheat Boom Years: 1905-1914." On the Contents pages the writings and authors are listed. All the works have been published, mainly in the first years of this century: some are extracts of books, others appeared in journals and two were initially given as speeches. The editor includes a brief introduction to each, giving background data about the writer and situation.

There is one article written by a man, unidentified, which presents a most unhappy picture of an English woman's life on a western ranch. It provides a foil for the most engaging piece in the book, written actually in refutation, namely, "A Lady's Life on a Ranch," by Mrs. Walter Skrine, pen name, "Moir O'Neill." From this article the editor selects the intriguing but relevant title of the book.

Susan Jackel has brought together a collection of

significant material which through articulation of the feminine viewpoint helps to clarify and redefine the social history of the prairies in the settlement period. However the research use of this valuable work would have been enhanced by an index. Many articles contain important historical information to which the subject and contents offer no clues.

*A Flannel Shirt & Liberty* is a worthy addition to Western Canadiana and the editor is to be congratulated on its production.

**N. Eldon Tanner, His Life and Service**, edited by G. Homer Durham in collaboration with several associates. Deseret Book Company. \$8.95. *Reviewed by Charles Ursenbach.*

In this book are recorded many of the accomplishments of N. Eldon Tanner. He was a school teacher and principal, and a country merchant, and was elected to the Cardston Town Council. In 1935 he was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and was appointed Speaker member of the Assembly in February, 1936. Seven months later he was called to be Minister of Lands and Mines. In this capacity he had a bill passed to conserve the natural resources of Alberta. He aided in many issues important to the people of Alberta and Canada.

After 17 years in the cabinet he considered he had done the work he was elected to do, and resigned. Soon he was made president of the new Merrill Petroleums. Two years later, in 1952 he was requested to head Trans-Canada Pipe Lines. This he resisted, but under pressure from several leaders, being told that he owed this to the people of Canada, he accepted, and for the next five years he faced severe opposition from big companies and federal government leaders. But he successfully overcame this opposition and the job was completed in 1957.

More important to him than business was his wife, Sara, their five daughters and their children. As much time as possible was spent with them. Next to his family in importance was his work in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon). From his early years he held important positions: from scout master to bishop, to president of the branch of the Church in Edmonton, and then to be president of the newly formed stake in Calgary.



After six and a half years in this office he was called to be one of the general authorities of the Church in Salt Lake City. Here he served in a number of capacities, and was chosen to be counsellor successively to four presidents. In 1978, because of his valuable service to the city as well as to the Church he was made "The Giant in our City." Although not stated in the book, Mr. Tanner died November 27, 1982.

In this book the reader will get to know N. Eldon Tanner as a great leader who successfully overcame numerous difficulties and made important contributions to Alberta, to Canada and to the Mormon Church. The Journal of Trade and Commerce in Western Canada stated, "N. Eldon Tanner has completed a record of success in government and business unequalled in Western Canada."

**Why We Act Like Canadians**, by Pierre Berton. Toronto: McClellan and Stewart. 113 pp. bound. \$10.00.

Pierre Berton, one of Canada's most prolific and well known authors, has produced an excellent book which explains why Canadians are different from Americans. Presented as a series of letters to Sam (presumably Uncle Sam), the book is a delightful and readable account in which the author often draws upon his own knowledge and experiences in the Yukon. But there is depth here, too, for Berton astutely puts his finger on many of the points which divide the two nations.

One of the most important of these, he says, is that Canadians don't mind being governed and are willing to accept more authority over their lives than Americans. He traces this difference back to 1776, when Americans revolted against British rule but the United Empire Loyalists, who formed a solid foundation for English-speaking Canada, preferred to remain under the Crown.

There are many other differences, some humorous, but most of them make a point. Berton does not claim that one system is superior to the other; simply that they are different. It is a good book.

— H.A.D.

**Hold High Your Heads (History of the Metis Nation In Western Canada)**, by A.-H. de Tremaudan, translated by Elizabeth Maguet. Pemmican Publications, Winnipeg, 210 pp., \$12.95. Reviewed by Raymond Huel, Lethbridge.

*Hold High Your Heads* is the English language edition of August-Henri de Tremaudan's *Histoire de la nation metisse*. In 1909, prominent members of the Metis community met and decided that the time had come to place the events of 1869-70 and 1885 in a true perspective, one that would render justice to the Metis rather than vindicate contemporary elites. It was felt that since 1885 the Metis had bowed their heads "under an avalanche of calumny" and had remained silent. The proposed history would "inspire in the new generation of French-Canadian Metis a pride in their ancestry and their past." The Historical Committee of l'Union Nationale Metisse Saint Joseph de Manitoba began to study documents, interview witnesses and challenge traditional interpretations.

The Historical Committee later approached de Tremaudan and asked him to write the history of the Metis nation. He accepted and began to work on it in the spring of 1927. In some quarters, however, his efforts were not looked upon too kindly. It was felt that the Metis wanted to challenge the *status quo* with sensational if not scandalous revelations concerning the part played by "certain noted persons now dead." There were also innuendoes that the author would have to accept the dictates of the Metis community and its leaders.

Not only was the author sympathetic to the Metis, he also challenged the traditional French Catholic viewpoint which argued that Bishop Tache and George Etienne Cartier had not grasped the importance of colonizing the West. According to de Tremaudan, if Riel and the Metis had been left alone in 1870 there would have been a second Quebec in the West and this would have had a positive influence on the Dominion because Quebec's role as a countervailing force in Confederation would have been enhanced. He also affirmed that the West owed its autonomy as well as its equality with the other provinces to the efforts of Riel and the Metis.

de Tremaudan died before completing a special chapter on the events of 1885. The Historical Committee decided that it would publish posthumously what he had written and include a special section based on its own research. This appendix refuted accusations made against Riel to the effect that: he forced the Metis to take up arms; he requisitioned the church in Batoche, desecrated it and held the missionaries and sisters prisoner in the rectory; he was insane, apostatized and forced his followers to abandon their faith. In addition, the appendix described Riel's trial as a "legal comedy." It also



argued that the missionaries, instead of remaining neutral in 1885, had done everything in their power to impede Riel's activities. Worse than being Middleton's informers, the clergy even appealed to Quebec not to demonstrate any sympathy for Riel after he surrendered.

As could be expected, this appendix generated considerable controversy. For his part, A.G. Morice, the noted Oblate historian, wrote a 91-page critique of *La nation metisse*, in which he took particular exception to the appendix. Morice hinted that, wracked by illness, de Tremaudan was not himself when he wrote the book. Furthermore, Morice claimed that the author had confided in him that the Metis wanted him to make statements which were not true. Other historians pointed to the absence of footnotes and references as well as numerous inaccuracies.

This English translation by Margaret Maguet will permit more Canadians to familiarize themselves with a Metis interpretation of two critical events in the history of the Canadian West. In addition, this book is crucial to an understanding of the Metis nationality and sense of identity. A.S. Lussier has written a perceptive introductory essay which situates the events leading to the publication of *La nation metisse* within the context of changing relationships between the Metis and French Catholic communities in Manitoba. Unfortunately, subsequent annotations and editorial comments have been kept to a minimum with the result that many readers will not grasp the full significance of de Tremaudan's sympathetic account or the controversial appendix. The errors singled out by earlier critics, as well as other inaccuracies that went unnoticed, should have been noted and corrected.

#### BRIEF REVIEWS

**John Tootoosis; A Biography of a Cree Leader**, by Norma Sluman and Jean Goodwill. Ottawa: Golden Dog Press. 235 pp. illus. paper.

This book tells the life story of a Saskatchewan Cree leader who has been prominent in Canadian Indian politics since the 1930s. Much of his early activities extended into Alberta, particularly during the years of the League of Indians of Western Canada. More books like this are needed of 20th century Indian leaders.

**New Beginnings; A Social History of Canada**, by James H. Marsh and Daniel Francis. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. illus. paper, 270 pp. \$8.95.

This the second volume of a resource book for Canadian teachers. Beginning with the colonies in

North America, it traces Canada's social history to 1919, with considerable emphasis on the West. Perhaps the most refreshing part of the volume is the excellent selection of photographs. The authors appear to have avoided the commonplace pictures one sees in every history and discovered a vast wealth of seldom seen views of Canadian life.

**A Reader's Guide to Canadian History, 1: Beginnings to Confederation**, edited by D.A. Muise, 253 pp. \$7.95; and **2: Confederation to the Present**, edited by J.L. Granatstein and Paul Stevens, 329 pp. \$8.95. Both paperback. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

As stated in the first volume, the purpose of these editions is "to pick out the best works and to focus on the most recent research and writing in the major areas of Canadian historical writing."

**Beyond the Harvest; Canadian Grain at the Crossroads**, by Barry Wilson. Saskatoon: Prairie Books. 289 pp. paper. \$14.95.

This book looks at the past and present to determine problems which lie ahead for the prairie grain farmer.

**Metis Makers of History**, by Grant MacEwan. Saskatoon: Prairie Books. 171 pp. paper. \$12.95.

Includes biographies of 18 prominent western Metis leaders.

**The One-and-a-Half Men**, by Murray Dobbin. Vancouver: New Star Books. 270 pp. paper.

An excellent biography of two prominent Metis political leaders, Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris. Its background covers the Metis fight for their rights during the first half of the 20th century.

**We Seized our Rifles**, edited by Lee Silliman. Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press. 214 pp. paper. \$7.95.

This collection of articles from turn-of-the-century American journals includes a number of Alberta pieces, including an article by Cecil Denny, interview with Hugh Munro, and Charles Aubrey's "The Edmonton Buffalo Herd."

**Rubaboo**, by Dorine Thomas. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications. 99 pp. paper. \$6.95.

This is a fascinating collection of recipes, craft tips, and pioneer inventiveness, all based upon the experiences of settlers in the 19th century. It includes such items as making pemmican, currant scones, hard cheese, dyeing wool, making herbal medicines, dipping candles, making quilts, tanning leather, and making children's toys.



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“I make the prophecy that stock raising will yet be one of the features of the Canadian Northwest.”

— E. Hubbard  
in Martel's Weekly, New York, March 1906,  
after the disastrous winter of 1905-06.

